# Dave Fuehrer — Gryt Health

Dave Fuehrer, two-time testicular cancer survivor and founder of Gryt Health, says, “Losing my balls helped me become more of a man.”

August 26, 2018 By Justin Birckbichler

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Welcome to the Band of Ballers! In this series on ABSOT, I’m turning over control to some other ballsy testicular cancer survivors and patients who have inspired me with their work in advocacy and awareness during and after their diagnosis. This month’s feature is all about Dave Fuehrer, the founder and CEO of Gryt Health, the minds who developed the Stupid Cancer App (check out ABSOT’s posts about the App here). Dave recently gave a Ted Talk, entitled “The Science of Living.” Enjoy!

I won’t try to convince you that going through testicular cancer twice in my twenties wasn’t physically painful. It was. But when the physical pain started to subside… a new tidal wave of emotional, mental (and even subconscious) pain began to take its place.

In the few short minutes I have to convey something meaningful, I want to focus on how much we suffer beyond the physical challenges of cancer. As men, we often hear comments like “Be strong,” “Tough it out,” or my personal tormentor: “You gotta have balls to try something like that.”

I’ll admit it, before facing testicular cancer — I fully bought in to that mentality.

As a former athlete, ignoring pain is what made me who I was. For context, this was me winning a New York State Natural Bodybuilding Title in 2001.

A few months after winning the title, I felt something different in my groin. I just had this really weird feeling about it. I was a senior in college and remember walking into the Health Services office. Whatever I said, they got me right in (Editor’s Note: Sounds like the doctors were about to actually get them right out) and then immediately sent for an ultrasound at the hospital. Testicular cancer. BOOM. Just like that. I remember thinking “How fast can I recover from the orchiectomy and get back to the gym?” And that was it, ignoring pain again as quickly as I could.

Five years later, I started to notice changes in my other testicle.

You might think having one diagnosis already… I would be eager to get it checked out. But denial is a powerful thing, my friends. I waited several months (with continued atrophying) until my routine check-up.

It was a whirlwind of a few weeks. CT Scan. Followed by MRI. Followed by immediate attempts to determine sperm count. “None present.” Then immediately into surgery…

Dictation Date: 13 March 2007

SPECIMEN: LEFT TESTICLE

— SEMINOMA, 1.8 cm

— MULTIPLE FOCI OF INTRATUBULAR GIANT CELL NEOPLASIA WITH FOCAL AREAS OF SEMINOMA

That’s what my surgical pathology report reads. I have it in front of me as I write this. Almost not believing it was me, Patient No: 342661320XX.

Soon thereafter, I started radiation treatments, covering my pelvis through my abdomen. I remember feeling dirty inside — like my body was betraying me. Still, I just wanted to ignore it all.

But while ignoring pain can be a highly effective approach to athletics, it is the direct enemy to men’s health. My training as an athlete taught me to ignore all of the real pain I faced from cancer (including anxiety, PTSD, isolation, and loss of identity),. What I’ve learned in the last 10 years is that you can only ignore these things for so long before they overwhelm your life (at least, this was certainly the case in my life).

A few years ago, I made what I thought was a mistake. I was so full of pain inside, that I let some of it slip out. In a moment of breakdown, I admitted how broken I felt. But this started to change my life. People didn’t judge me in the way I expected — quite the opposite, actually. They thanked me for being open and told me how strong I was to be vulnerable. (If you’re a man, your internal monologue is probably going crazy right now!) Admitting pain, crying and asking for help…how could anyone see me, a former bodybuilder, as… strong?!

Fast forward to 2018 — I’m a far different man after facing testicular cancer twice.

I had the honor of giving a TEDx Talk this year. It was the most honest I’ve been about my experience as a two-time testicular cancer survivor. Getting to this point was only possible because of the “mistake” I thought I made all those years ago.

Between that moment of starting to let things out and today, my life has completely changed. I’m humbled to play a small part of helping men (and women) in 80 countries feel proud of who they are after cancer.

I work with a team of inspired survivors and caregivers at our company, GRYT Health (pronounced “grit”). Together, we have built and run a free app that’s used by survivors and the people who love us around the world. The purpose for our app is to help others like us live on our terms. Nobody is more of an expert on our life than we are. When we think of ourselves as a “patient” or “caregiver,” we’re dependent on others. At Gryt, we think of ourselves as Healthcare Consumers

— those who are empowered to know our options and choose what's right for us. As Healthcare Consumers, WE are in charge.

If you ask me what I hope my legacy in this world will be, my answer will be counted in the number of lives changed. In the number of people who felt helpless but now feel hopeful. In the individuals who went from feeling out of control or alone to those who now feel empowered and connected.

I am truly grateful for the leaders of this movement who help each of us stop "being tough" and start talking openly. I admire Justin at ABSOT for his willingness to be open about our struggles — the physical ones, and even more importantly, the emotional ones. (Editor's Note: Aw Dave, you make me blush, but since you said something… if you're reading this, check out this piece about how to talk about testicles.) I am in awe to see organizations like The Movember Foundation (through their TrueNTH Testicular Cancer program and their Quality of Life pages) support and celebrate men's health in the way they do.

If I can ask you to take one action, it is to admit to something that scares you.

Admit it to a friend, to a partner, or to a piece of paper. But just admit it. Getting that fear out of the darkness inside us and exposing it to light is the first step in changing the world. And it is the first step in helping men become of the men we're proud to be. Thank you for changing the world with us.

Be sure to connect with Dave by visiting him on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter — #MensHealth #OnMyTerms #poweredbygryt. Until next time, Carpe Scrotiem!

Know someone (or even yourself!) who is supporting TC awareness and would be willing to share their story? Drop their name, contact, and why they should be featured into this Google Form and I'll reach out to them and/or you!

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